

REMARKS

In response to the final Office Action dated March 1, 2006, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration based on the above claim amendment and the following remarks. Applicant respectfully submits that the claims as presented are in condition for allowance.

Previously Claims 9 and 11-34 were pending in the application. Claim 16 has been amended, leaving Claims 9 and 11-34 for consideration upon the entry of the amendments. No new matter has been added by the amendments.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112

Claim 16-23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claim 16 has been amended to overcome the rejections. Therefore, it is believed that Claim 16 and its dependent claims, Claims 17-23, are allowable.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103

Claims 9, 11-17, and 19-34 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muka et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,613,821 (hereinafter "Muka") in view of Briner et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,810,537 (hereinafter "Briner") and Mastroianni, U.S. Patent No. 6,068,668 (hereinafter "Mastroianni"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections.

For an obviousness rejection to be proper, the Examiner must meet the burden of establishing that all elements of the invention are disclosed in the prior art; and that the prior art relied upon, coupled with knowledge generally available in the art at the time of the invention, must contain some suggestion or incentive that would have motivated the skilled artisan to modify a reference or combined references. *In re Fine*, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1598 (Fed. Cir. 1988); *In Re Wilson*, 165 U.S.P.Q. 494, 496 (C.C.P.A. 1970).

Claim 9 includes, *inter alia*, at least the element "a unifying means for unifying the cover of the container and the door in the low cleanliness room". In contrary, Col. 8, lines 13-17 of Muka teach that with the carrier door 42 so positioned adjacent the load lock door 80, a load lock door drive mechanism 118 is then operated for moving the load lock door and, with it, the unit comprising the coupling device 98 and the carrier door 42

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from the closed position to the open position. The word "unifying" is an inflected form of the word "unify". The Merriam-Webster Online dictionary defines the word "unify" as "to make into a unit or a coherent whole". Further, Col. 5, lines 10-17 of Muka teach that using this technique, ..., or the cassette would be transferred with the wafers within the clean mini-environment existing between the carrier, SMIF box, or the like, and the wafer processing equipment. Fig. 2 of Muka shows that the carrier door 42 and the load lock door 80 are positioned in the mini-environment 58. Therefore, the carrier door and the load lock door as described in Muka are positioned in a high cleanliness room.

The Examiner however, states on page 6 of the Office Action that even though the mini-environment may be somewhat cleaner than the surrounding environment, it is still a "low cleanliness room" when compared to the "high cleanliness" load lock. Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner.

During patent examination, the pending claims must be given their broadest reasonable interpretation consistent with the specification. *In re Hyatt*, 211 F.3d 1367, 1372, 54 USPQ 2d 1664, 1667 (Fed. Cir. 2000) As described in the specification, for example, page 2, lines 8-15 of the specification, the low cleanliness room is the room through which the container having is wafers is transported, such as an outdoor. Col. 3, lines 21-23 of Muka teach that an isolation housing or mini-environment sealingly isolates the load lock chamber and the interior of the carrier from the surrounding atmosphere. Therefore, the surrounding atmosphere is the room through which the container is transported, and considered as the low cleanliness room as recited in the claimed invention. In contrary, the isolation housing or mini-environment can be considered as the high cleanliness room as recited in the claimed invention. Therefore, Muka fails to teach or suggest the feature element "a unifying means for unifying the cover of the container and the door in the low cleanliness room", as recited in Claim 9.

The Examiner also states that Mastroianni shows a similar system by noting Fig. 4 of Mastroianni. Col. 3, lines 42-45 of Mastroianni teach that after the shuttle 28 has been fully retracted into the apparatus 20, the outer door 32 is closed and will not be allowed to open until after processing of the substrate 40 within carrier 38 is completed. Col. 3, lines 52-53 of Mastroianni teach that once closed, the doors 26 and 39 are coupled to each other by vacuum or other means. Col. 2, lines 63-67 of Mastroianni teach that the

cleanliness of the apparatus and fab are maintained, such that the cleanliness inside the tool load port door of the semiconductor manufacturing apparatus is at least one hundred times cleaner than the fab environment. Therefore, the doors 26 and 39 are coupled to each other in the apparatus 20, that is, in the cleaner room. Accordingly, Mastroianni fails to teach or suggest the feature element "a unifying means for unifying the cover of the container and the door in the low cleanliness room", as recited in Claim 9.

Briner does not teach or suggest the element "a unifying means for unifying the cover of the container and the door in the low cleanliness room", as recited in Claim 9. Therefore, Muka in view of Briner and Mastroianni does not render Claim 9 obvious, because they fail to teach or suggest at least the element "a unifying means for unifying the cover of the container and the door in the low cleanliness room", as recited in Claim 9.

Since they contain similar features, Claims 16, 24, 29, and 32 are patentable over Muka in view of Briner and Mastroianni for at least the reasons given for Claim 9. Claims 11-15 and 33-34 depend from Claim 9; Claims 17, and 19-23 depend from Claim 16; Claims 25-28 depend from Claim 24; and Claims 30-31 depend from Claim 29. These dependent claims are believed to be allowable due to their dependency on Claims 9, 16, 24, and 29.

Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muka in view of Briner and Mastroianni, and further in view of Bonora et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,895,191 (hereinafter "Bonora"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections.

Bonora fails to teach or suggest at least the element "the cover is unified with the door of the movable stage in the low cleanliness room", as recited in Claim 16, from which Claim 18 depends. Therefore, Muka in view of Briner and Mastroianni, and further in view of Bonora does not render Claim 16 obvious, because they fail to teach or suggest all of the elements of Claim 16. Claim 18 is allowable due to its dependency on Claim 16.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this application

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be allowed and a Notice of Allowance issued. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicant's attorney would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is cordially requested to telephone the undersigned.

In the event the Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks deems additional fees to be due in connection with this application, Applicant's attorney hereby authorizes that such fee be charged to Deposit Account No. 06-1130.

Respectfully submitted,

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